

National Popular Vote – **House Bill 6163**

March 11, 2011

Nobody today would seriously dispute that the voices of voters in “safe states” like Connecticut are going unheard in presidential elections. Voters here can go to the polls, of course, but not without knowing far in advance what the outcome in their state will be.

The National Popular Vote bill helps address this serious and reoccurring problem in our democracy by changing the “winner take all” rule that Connecticut and most states use to award their electoral votes, and ending the division of the country into the states that matter and the states that do not.

If we switch to a system that gives every voter a meaningful voice regardless of where they happen to live, civic participation will benefit enormously. Today, political parties and independent groups spend hundreds of millions of dollars to register and mobilize voters, but their focus is on a small number of politically-important swing states. The effect is higher turnout in states like Ohio and Florida, and depressed turnout everywhere else.

Youth participation suffers in particular. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), based at Tufts University, 51% of young voters (age 18-29) turned out in battleground states in 2000 election, while only 38% of young voters turned out in the rest of the country.¹

In 2004, the gap between youth turnout in battleground and non-competitive states widened. CIRCLE found that 64% of young people voted in 10 battleground states. But only 47% of 18-29 year olds voted in the other 40 states. This is a gap of 17%.

This is a disparity that could persist for decades to come. Mark Franklin, a Professor of International Politics right here at Trinity College wrote an analysis² of voter turnout that found that voting behavior is often established during the first election someone is eligible to vote in, and continues throughout life.

A national popular vote would make every vote equal, and compel candidates to campaign in all fifty states. By taking this step, the General Assembly will be encouraging civic participation in all corners of the country and strengthening our democracy for a new generation.

¹ *Presidential Inequality* – Report by FairVote (2008) - <http://www.fairvote.org/report-presidential-election-inequalities>

² *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies Since 1945* (2004)